

# FREGEAN THEORIES OF NAMES FROM FICTION

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## 1 Introduction

J. K. Rowling introduced the name ‘Hermione Granger’ in the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* and used it in a number of subsequent novels, including *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.<sup>1</sup> ‘Hermione Granger’ is a *name from fiction*.<sup>2</sup> Gottlob Frege (1892) discusses names from fiction in “On Sense and Reference”. In this paper, I discuss views about names from fiction that are based on, or inspired by, what Frege says there. In sections 2 and 3, I discuss views on which names from fiction refer to numbers or properties. In sections 4 and 5, I discuss the view that names from fiction don’t refer to anything but express senses given by definite descriptions.

We can distinguish three kinds of sentences (or three kinds of uses of sentences) that contain names from fiction.

- (1) Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.
- (2) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.
- (3) Hermione Granger is a fictional character.

(1) is *fictive* when it’s used in telling a story; (2) is *metafictive* when it’s used, from a perspective external to the story, to report what goes on in the story; and (3) is *transfictive* when it’s used from a perspective external to the story but not to report what goes on in the story.<sup>3</sup>

One difference between the metafictive (2) and the transfictive (3) is that prefixing (3) with ‘According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*’ doesn’t yield a truth.

- (4) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger is a fictional character.
- (4) is false. (In the novel, Hermione is a person, not a fictional character.)

## 2 Stipulation

### 2.1 *The View*

According to *stipulationism about names from fiction*, ‘Hermione Granger’ is stipulated to refer to the number 0, as is any other name from fiction.<sup>4</sup>

Frege doesn't discuss stipulationism about names from fiction, but he considers an analogous view about definite descriptions that don't refer, like 'the celestial body most distant from the earth' or 'the celestial body distinct from the earth'.<sup>5</sup> Speaking of definite descriptions, he says, "an expression of the kind in question must actually always be assured of a referent, by means of a special stipulation, e.g. by the convention that 0 shall count as its referent, when the predicate applies to no object or to more than one".<sup>6</sup> (Frege doesn't say who gets to stipulate what the referent is, or how the convention is established, or why the number that gets picked is 0 rather than, say, 1 or -17.)

## 2.2 Fictive and Transfictive Sentences

According to stipulationism about names from fiction, (1) is true if and only if (1S) is.<sup>7</sup>

- (1) Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.  
(1S) 0 can attend multiple classes at the same time.

But, one might object, (1) is true, while (1S) is false.

Stipulationists about names from fiction might reply that we don't care about the truth-values of fictive sentences like (1), so it doesn't matter if stipulationism about names from fiction gets their truth-values wrong. Frege (1892, 33) says,

In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation.

But this reply might be at odds with *the paradox of fiction*, in which we care about what happens in a work of fiction even if we know that it's just a story.<sup>8</sup>

Alternatively, stipulationists about names from fiction might replace fictive sentences with metafictive ones and say something like the following. "(1) is false. (So (1) and (1S) have the same truth-value: they're both false.) But that's okay as long as

- (2) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time

is true".<sup>9</sup>

According to stipulationism about names from fiction, (3) is true if and only if (3S) is.

- (3) Hermione Granger is a fictional character.  
(3S) 0 is a fictional character.

But, one might object, (3) is true, while (3S) is false.

Even if stipulationists about names from fiction can replace fictive sentences like (1) with metafictive sentences like (2), it's not as easy to replace transfictive sentences like (3) with metafictive sentences. Stipulationists about names from fiction can't say, "(3) is false. (So (3) and (3S) have the same truth-value: they're both false.) But that's okay as long as the straightforward metafictive counterpart of (3) is true". For the straightforward metafictive counterparts of (3) is (4).

- (4) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger is a fictional character.

And (4) isn't true.

### 2.3 Identities and Predications

According to stipulationism about names from fiction, (5) and (6) are true if and only if (5S) and (6S) are.

- (5) Hermione Granger is identical with Luna Lovegood.
- (6) Hermione Granger is a natural number.
- (5S) 0 is identical with 0.
- (6S) 0 is a natural number.

(‘Luna Lovegood’ is a name that J. K. Rowling introduced in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.<sup>10</sup>) But, one might object, (5) and (6) are false, while (5S) and (6S) are true.

Stipulationists about names from fiction could reply that (sometimes) different names from fiction refer to different numbers. The modification would allow (5) to come out false, if it has the same truth-value as (5S\*).

- (5S\*) 0 is identical with 1.

But the modification doesn’t address the problem with (6), which arises because, according to stipulationism about names from fiction, names from fiction refer to objects that have extraneous mathematical properties.

## 3 Reference to Sense

### 3.1 The View

On Frege’s (1892, 26, 31) view, the name ‘J. K. Rowling’ *refers to* an object<sup>11</sup> (namely, Joanne Rowling) and *expresses* a sense. This sense presents Rowling. Perhaps it’s given by ‘the author of a highly successful series of novels about a bespectacled wizard’ and is the property *being the author of a highly successful series of novels about a bespectacled wizard*.

On one view, ‘Hermione Granger’ doesn’t refer to anything but expresses a sense. This sense doesn’t present anything. Perhaps it’s given by ‘the Muggle-born Gryffindor who is best friends with Harry and Ron and often uses her dry humor, deft recall, and encyclopedic knowledge to save them’—or, for short, ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’. I put off discussing that view until section 4; in this section, I discuss a different view that appeals to senses.

On the *reference-to-sense view*, ‘Hermione Granger’ refers to the sense given by ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’, which is *being the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time*.<sup>12</sup> And, similarly, other names from fiction refer to senses given by definite descriptions.

### 3.2 Fictive and Transfictive Sentences

On the reference-to-sense view, (1) is true if and only if (1RS) is.<sup>13</sup>

- (1) Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.
- (1RS) *Being the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time* can attend multiple classes at the same time.

But, one might object, (1) is true, while (1RS) is false.

Proponents of the reference-to-sense view might replace fictive sentences with metafictive ones and say something like the following. “(1) is false. But that’s okay as long as

- (2) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time

is true".<sup>14</sup>

On the reference-to-sense view, (3) is true if and only if (3RS) is.

- (3) Hermione Granger is a fictional character.  
(3RS) *Being the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time* is a fictional character.

And, one might object, (3) is true, while (3RS) is false.

But proponents of the reference-to-sense view might reply as follows. "(3RS) is true. It's absurd to think that a number is a fictional character. But it's not absurd to think that a property is".<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3 Identities

According to *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, 'Lord Voldemort' and 'Tom Riddle' refer to the same person.<sup>16</sup> On the reference-to-sense view, 'Lord Voldemort' and 'Tom Riddle' might refer to different senses: for example, *being Harry's archnemesis* and *being the sympathetic guy Ginny talks to*. In that case, on the reference-to-sense view, (7) is true if and only if (7RS) is.

- (7) Lord Voldemort is identical with Tom Riddle.  
(7RS) *Being Harry's archnemesis* is identical with *being the sympathetic guy Ginny talks to*.

But, one might object, (7) is true, while (7RS) is false.<sup>17</sup>

Proponents of the reference-to-sense view might reply that it's okay if (7) is false, as long as (7) is true in the novel. On this reply, there are two villains—Lord Voldemort and Tom Riddle—that, in the novel, are the same person. But it might seem that, on the contrary, there's one villain that, in the novel, goes by two names ('Lord Voldemort' and 'Tom Riddle').<sup>18</sup>

## 4 Sense without Reference

### 4.1 The View

According to *descriptivism about names from fiction*, 'Hermione Granger' doesn't refer to anything but expresses a sense given by 'the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time'.<sup>19</sup> And, similarly, other names from fiction don't refer to anything but express senses given by definite descriptions.

If 'Hermione Granger' expresses a sense given by 'the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time', then the definite description *fixes the reference* of 'Hermione Granger'.<sup>20</sup>

**Reference-fixing:** For any name *n* and any definite description *d*, *d* fixes the reference of *n* if and only if (i), for any object *o*, if *n* refers to *o*, then it's because *d* refers to *o* that *n* refers to *o*; and (ii), for any object *o*, if *n* doesn't refer to *o*, then it's because *d* doesn't refer to *o* that *n* doesn't refer to *o*.

According to descriptivism about names from fiction, 'Hermione Granger' doesn't refer to anything, and it's because 'the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time' doesn't refer to anything that 'Hermione Granger' doesn't refer to anything either.

## 4.2 Fictive and Transfictive Sentences

According to descriptivism about names from fiction, (1) is true if and only if (1D) is.<sup>21</sup>

- (1) Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.
- (1D) The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time can attend multiple classes at the same time.

But, one might object, (1) is true, while (1D) isn't. (On Frege's (1892, 32) view, (1D) is neither true nor false if 'the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time' doesn't refer to anything.)

Frege says that we don't care whether the fictive (1) is true. If we do care, though, perhaps we can replace it with

- (2) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione Granger can attend multiple classes at the same time.

And (2) is true.<sup>22</sup>

According to descriptivism about names from fiction, (3) is true if and only if (3D) is.

- (3) Hermione Granger is a fictional character.
- (3D) The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time is a fictional character.

But, one might object, (3) is true, while (3D) isn't (since 'the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time' doesn't refer to anything).

Descriptivists about names from fiction might say that (3) is true if and only if something more complicated like (3D★) is true.

- (3D★) The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time doesn't exist, but there's a fiction according to which the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists.

(3D★) is at least partly metafictional; it contains an 'according to the fiction' operator. The strategy is to replace transfictive sentences like (3) with sentences that are at least partly metafictional. Descriptivists about names from fiction can then say that (3D★)—and hence (3)—is true.<sup>23</sup>

The first conjunct of (3D★) raises technical complications. On Frege's view, atomic sentences that contain definite descriptions that don't refer to anything are neither true nor false. So, unless descriptivists about names from fiction have a complicated story to tell about positive existentials like 'The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists', that sentence will come out neither true nor false; and, unless they have a complicated story to tell about negation, the negation of that sentence—'The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time doesn't exist'—will also come out neither true nor false. And, if the first conjunct of (3D★) is neither true nor false, then (3D★) isn't true. But perhaps descriptivists about names from fiction could tell a complicated story about positive existentials.<sup>24</sup> Or perhaps they could use exclusion rather than choice negation and get the negation of a truth-valueless positive existential to come out true.<sup>25</sup>

## 4.3 More Transfictive Sentences

According to descriptivism about names from fiction, (8)–(11) are true if and only if (8D)–(11D) are.

- (8) Hermione Granger appears in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.
- (9) Emma Watson portrayed Hermione Granger in eight films.
- (10) J. K. Rowling created Hermione Granger.

- (11) Hermione Granger is J. K. Rowling's favorite character.
- (8D) The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time appears in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.
- (9D) Emma Watson portrayed the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time in eight films.
- (10D) J. K. Rowling created the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time.
- (11D) The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time is J. K. Rowling's favorite character.

But, one might object, (8)–(11) are (or could be) true, while (8D)–(11D) aren't.<sup>26</sup>

Descriptivists about names from fiction might say that (8)–(10) are true if and only if more complicated sentences like (8D★)–(10D★) are true.

- (8D★) According to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists.
- (9D★) Emma Watson is such that there are eight films according to each of which she is the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time.
- (10D★) There's a fiction by J. K. Rowling according to which the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists and there's no earlier fiction by anyone else according to which the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists.

And, descriptivists about names from fiction might say, (8D★)–(10D★) are true.<sup>27</sup>

It's not obvious how to extend this piecemeal reply to other transfixive sentences, including (11), but a more systematic reply is available to descriptivists about names from fiction.<sup>28</sup> According to *realism about fictional characters*, there are fictional characters.<sup>29</sup> In "Fictionalism about Fictional Characters", Stuart Brock (2002) uses an 'according to realism about fictional characters' operator to analyze certain sentences that contain names from fiction. Adopting Brock's analysis, descriptivists about names from fiction can say that (8)–(11) are true if and only if (8FD)–(11FD) are.<sup>30</sup>

- (8FD) According to realism about fictional characters, the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time appears in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.
- (9FD) According to realism about fictional characters, Emma Watson portrayed the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time in eight films.
- (10FD) According to realism about fictional characters, J. K. Rowling created the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time.
- (11FD) According to realism about fictional characters, the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time is J. K. Rowling's favorite character.

Descriptivists about names from fiction can then say that (8FD)–(11FD)—and hence (8)–(11)—are true.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.4 Alternatives

According to descriptivism about names from fiction, senses are *descriptive*—that is, they're given by definite descriptions—and *object-independent*: that is, some senses don't present anything.

Frege (1892, 27 n2) suggests that the sense of 'Aristotle' is descriptive; in particular, he suggests that it's given by 'the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great' or 'the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira'. And he suggests that the sense of 'Odysseus' (from Homer's *Odyssey*) is object-independent, because the name 'Odysseus' expresses a sense even though it doesn't refer to anything. Frege (1892, 32) says,

Is it possible that a sentence as a whole has only a sense, but no referent? At any rate, one might expect that such sentences occur, just as there are parts of sentences having sense but no referent. And sentences which contain proper names without referents will be of this kind. The sentence “Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep” obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name “Odysseus”, occurring therein, has a referent, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence has one.<sup>32</sup>

But there are alternative views on which senses are non-descriptive or object-dependent.

First, perhaps senses are non-descriptive.<sup>33</sup> Frege suggests as much.<sup>34</sup> For example, in the *Begriffsschrift*, he says that the “mode of determination” associated with a name might determine a point “immediately through intuition”.<sup>35</sup> A sense that presents something in this immediate way might not be given by a definite description. And, in “The Thought”, Frege (1918, 66) says, “everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no one else”. A sense that presents someone in this first-person way isn’t given by a definite description like ‘the speaker’. For the sense given by ‘the speaker’ doesn’t seem to be primitive, and it presents everyone in the same way.

A view on which senses are non-descriptive doesn’t face Saul Kripke’s (2013) objections to descriptivism about names from fiction, which are discussed in the next section.<sup>36</sup> But it still faces the objections discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. For any view on which ‘Hermione Granger’ doesn’t refer to anything faces objections about the truth-values of transfixive sentences like (3) and (8)–(11).

Second, perhaps senses are object-dependent.<sup>37</sup> If senses are modes of presentation of objects or ways of thinking about them, then perhaps every sense presents something. For there might not be a mode of presenting an object if there’s no object there to be presented, just as there might not be a way of thinking about an object if there’s no object there to be thought about.<sup>38</sup>

But a view on which senses are object-dependent still faces the objections discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. And, unlike descriptivists about names from fiction, proponents of such a view might not be able to adopt Brock’s analysis. For, if ‘Hermione Granger’ doesn’t express a sense and sentences that contain it don’t express thoughts, then it’s not clear whether there are any thoughts (or propositions) there to be true according to realism about fictional characters.

## 5 Kripke’s Objections

### 5.1 Background

At the end of Lecture I in *Reference and Existence*, Kripke (2013, 26–28) argues against descriptivism about names from fiction, which he calls “the Frege-Russell theory”.<sup>39</sup> In this section, I discuss two of Kripke’s objections.<sup>40</sup> But first I sketch some background.

In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke (1980) argues against a number of theses, including the following four.

- (1) To every name or designating expression ‘*X*’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties  $\phi$  such that *A* believes ‘ $\phi X$ ’.
- (2) One of those properties, or some conjointly, are believed by *A* to pick out some individual uniquely.
- (3) If most, or a weighted most, of the  $\phi$ ’s are satisfied by one unique object *y*, then *y* is the referent of ‘*X*’.
- (4) If the vote yields no unique object, ‘*X*’ does not refer.<sup>41</sup>

Kripke uses a number of counterexamples to these theses. Here I rehearse two pairs of counterexamples: ‘Cicero’ and ‘Feynman’, and ‘Gödel’ and ‘Peano’.

First, Kripke uses ‘Cicero’ and ‘Feynman’ as counterexamples to Theses (2) and (4). He says,

Let’s see if Thesis (2) is true ... In fact, most people, when they think of Cicero, just think of a famous Roman orator, without any pretension to think either that there was only one famous Roman orator or that one must know something else about Cicero to have a referent for the name. Consider Richard Feynman, to whom many of us are able to refer. He is a leading contemporary theoretical physicist. Everyone *here* (I’m sure!) can state the contents of Feynman’s theories so as to differentiate him from Gell–Mann. However, the man in the street, not possessing these abilities, may still use the name ‘Feynman’. When asked he will say: well he’s a physicist or something. He may not think that this picks out anyone uniquely. I still think he uses the name ‘Feynman’ as a name for Feynman.<sup>42</sup>

Thesis (4): If the vote yields no unique object the name doesn’t refer. Really this case has been covered before—has been covered in my previous examples ... the vote may not yield a *unique* object, as in the case of Cicero or Feynman.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to Thesis (2), speakers use ‘Cicero’ to refer to Cicero, and ‘Feynman’ to refer to Feynman, even if they don’t think that they could uniquely describe Cicero or Feynman. And, contrary to Thesis (4), ‘Cicero’ refers to Cicero, even though no unique object has *being a famous Roman orator*, just as ‘Feynman’ refers to Feynman, even though no unique object has *being a leading theoretical physicist*.

Second, Kripke (1980, 83–85) uses ‘Gödel’ and ‘Peano’ as counterexamples to Thesis (3). We are asked to imagine cases in which, contrary to Thesis (3), someone uniquely satisfies the description associated with the name, but the name doesn’t refer to that person: perhaps Schmidt is the person who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic, but ‘Gödel’ doesn’t refer to Schmidt (since it refers to Gödel); or perhaps Dedekind is the person who discovered the Peano axioms, but ‘Peano’ doesn’t refer to Dedekind (since it refers to Peano).

## 5.2 Kripke’s First Objection

Kripke uses ‘Sam Smith’ as a counterexample to the fictional analogs of Theses (2) and (4).<sup>44</sup> Here are the fictional analogs of Theses (1)–(4).

- (1★) To every name from fiction ‘X’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties  $\phi$  such that according to the fiction ‘ $\phi X$ ’.
- (2★) One of those properties, or some conjointly, are such that according to the fiction it or they pick out some individual uniquely.
- (3★) According to the fiction, if most, or a weighted most, of the  $\phi$ ’s are satisfied by one unique object  $\gamma$ , then  $\gamma$  is the referent of ‘X’.
- (4★) According to the fiction, if the vote yields no unique object, ‘X’ doesn’t refer.

Kripke (2013, 26) says,

One can see clearly now what an incorrect account of the facts about fiction the Frege–Russell theory gives, even supposing it is correct in a non-fictional case.

First, it says that the proper name means ‘*the* thing satisfying the properties in the story’. To affirm existence is to affirm that there is a *unique* thing satisfying the properties in the story. This is radically false. Why the uniqueness? Why should the story say anything that even putatively identifies an object uniquely? It talks about, very fleetingly, a certain tall man, Sam Smith, who accosted the hero on the corner of some street. Now does that mean that only one tall man ever accosted the hero of the story on some street? Or it may say just that Sam Smith is a tall man and that the hero knew him: it says ‘If

I were a tall man like Sam Smith, I would be such-and-such'. Does that really imply that Sam Smith is the unique tall man, or even the unique tall man about whom the hero ever so mused? It need not even mean that there is a unique tall man *called* 'Sam Smith' about whom the hero so mused. Perhaps there are several. Still, he was represented as musing about a particular tall man, Sam Smith, on this particular occasion. The story need not even putatively assert uniqueness.<sup>45</sup>

Contrary to Thesis (2\*), there aren't any properties corresponding to 'Sam Smith' that, according to the fiction, pick out some individual uniquely. And, contrary to Thesis (4\*), it's not the case that, according to the fiction, if the vote yields no unique object, then 'Sam Smith' doesn't refer to anything. (According to the fiction the following is the case: the vote yields no unique object, but 'Sam Smith' refers to Sam Smith.)

But, unlike 'Cicero' or 'Feynman', 'Sam Smith' isn't a counterexample to Thesis (4). 'Sam Smith' doesn't refer to anything (at least according to descriptivism about names from fiction). So, even if no unique object has *being a tall man called 'Sam Smith' who the hero mused about*, Thesis (4) is automatically true (since its consequent is true).

My interest here isn't in Theses (1\*)–(4\*), the fictional analogs of Theses (1)–(4). Rather my interest here is in descriptivism about names from fiction, understood as the view that names from fiction don't refer to anything but express senses given by definite descriptions. And 'Sam Smith' isn't a counterexample to descriptivism about names from fiction thus understood. Even if it's a counterexample to Theses (2\*) and (4\*), 'Sam Smith' might express a sense given by 'the tall man called "Sam Smith" who the hero mused about'. Descriptivists about names from fiction can say that 'the tall man called "Sam Smith" who the hero mused about' fixes the reference of 'Sam Smith': the definite description doesn't refer to anything, and it's because the definite description doesn't refer to anything that 'Sam Smith' doesn't refer to anything either.

### 5.3 Kripke's Second Objection

Kripke uses a case of accidental satisfaction as a counterexample to Thesis (3). He says,

Second, it is held that if there is an object which uniquely satisfies the properties attributed to the object in a story, then it is not a story: the thing really exists, and the account is not fictional at all. But the common practice of authors is just the very reverse. They print at the beginning of their story: 'The names used in this story are fictional, and any resemblance to characters living or dead is purely coincidental'. Suppose a person, believing himself to be possessed of a valid suit for invasion of privacy, sues the author of such a story, and proves in court that he uniquely satisfies the properties mentioned in that story. Then will the judge necessarily rule on behalf of the plaintiff? I think not. Suppose the author can show that he never heard of this man; that he definitely wasn't writing about him; that it was indeed a coincidence, just as he said. Then a reasonable judge would rule against the plaintiff, against Frege, against Russell, and against Wittgenstein, and hold that the author had a valid defense, though this person uniquely fits the story.<sup>46</sup>

This case echoes the 'Gödel' and 'Peano' cases from *Naming and Necessity*. Here, we're asked to imagine that someone accidentally satisfies the description associated with a name from fiction, but the name doesn't refer to that person (not because it refers to anyone else, but rather because it doesn't refer to anything at all).

Suppose that there's someone—call her 'HG'—in the real world who J. K. Rowling has never heard of but who saves Harry and Ron (or the bespectacled wizard and his gangly friend) all the time. Contrary to Thesis (3), 'Hermione Granger' doesn't refer to HG, even though HG uniquely satisfies

the description ‘person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’ (or ‘person who saves the bespectacled wizard and his gangly friend all the time’).

This case is a counterexample to descriptivism about names from fiction. Descriptivists about names from fiction can’t say that ‘Hermione Granger’ expresses a sense given by ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’, nor can they say that the definite description fixes the reference of ‘Hermione Granger’. Since ‘Hermione Granger’ doesn’t refer to anything, it doesn’t refer to HG. But it’s not because ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’ doesn’t refer to HG that ‘Hermione Granger’ doesn’t refer to HG. For, in this case, ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’ *does* refer to HG.<sup>47</sup>

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## Notes

- 1 See Rowling (1998, 1999b). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* was originally published in the UK as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. See Rowling (1997).
- 2 Not every name that occurs in a work of fiction is a name *from* fiction in the relevant sense. For example, ‘King’s Cross’ occurs in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, but it’s not a name from fiction in the relevant sense. (It was used to refer to a train station in London prior to the novel.) For a related distinction at the level of fictional characters, see Parsons (1980, 51–52).
- 3 See Currie (1990, 11, 158, 171). For ease of exposition, I talk about sentences, rather than uses of them, in what follows.
- 4 Brock (2002, 2) mentions but doesn’t endorse the view.
- 5 Frege (1892, 28) uses ‘the celestial body most distant from the earth’ as an example of a definite description that doesn’t refer to anything.
- 6 Frege (1892, 41 n9). Frege doesn’t endorse this view in “On Sense and Reference”. But he later endorses a related view. In the first volume of *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, Frege (1893, §11) says that a definite description that otherwise wouldn’t refer—because no object, or more than one object, satisfies its predicate—instead refers to the extension of the predicate. This entails something like the view that a definite description that otherwise wouldn’t refer because no object satisfies its predicate instead refers to the empty set.
- 7 ‘S’ is for ‘stipulationism’.
- 8 See Radford (1975).
- 9 See Parsons (1982, 83). Whether (2) is true depends on what thought (1) expresses, which depends on what sense ‘Hermione Granger’ expresses; and stipulationism about names from fiction doesn’t say what sense ‘Hermione Granger’ expresses. (On senses, see sections 3 and 4.) I ignore these complications in the text and assume that stipulationists about names from fiction can get (2) to come out true. As discussed below in the text, stipulationism about names from fiction faces further objections. Thanks to David Braun here.
- 10 See Rowling (2003). ‘Hermione Granger’ and ‘Luna Lovegood’ aren’t supposed to name the same person or fictional character.
- 11 People are objects. See Frege (1891, 17).
- 12 Parsons (1982) develops but doesn’t endorse the view. Lamarque (1996, 31–34) endorses the view in *Fictional Points of View* but rejects it elsewhere. See note 19.
- 13 ‘RS’ is for ‘reference-to-sense’.
- 14 Whether (2) is true depends on what sense ‘Hermione Granger’ expresses in (1). I continue to ignore this complication in the text. See note 9.
- 15 For example, on Wolterstorff’s (1980, 134–149) view, fictional characters are kinds, which are associated with properties. See also Wolterstorff (1980, 47).
- 16 See Rowling (1999a).
- 17 See Parsons (1982, 84–88).
- 18 See Parsons (1982, 85).

- 19 Lamarque and Olson (1994, 78–84) endorse the view. I am supposing that the definite description that, according to descriptivism about names from fiction, gives the sense of ‘Hermione Granger’ itself contains names from fiction: namely, ‘Harry’ and ‘Ron’. This can give rise to circularity problems, if for example the definite description that gives the sense of ‘Harry’ contains ‘Hermione Granger’. I ignore these problems in the text. For discussion, see Kripke (1980, 81–82).
- 20 See Kripke (1980, 59).
- 21 ‘D’ is for ‘descriptivism’.
- 22 If ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’ gives the sense of ‘Hermione Granger’, then the definite description *gives the meaning* of the name. (See Kripke 1980, 59.) In that case, (1) and (1D) express the same thought. And that thought is true according to the fiction, so (2) is true. See notes 9 and 14.
- 23 See McKinsey (2020, 133). Alternatively, descriptivists about names from fiction could use Brock’s (2002) ‘according to realism about fictional characters’ operator and replace (3D) with ‘According to realism about fictional characters, the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time is a fictional character’. See note 31.
- 24 Frege might hold that ‘The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time exists’ is necessarily equivalent to ‘“The person who saves Harry and Ron all the time” refers to something’. He distinguishes two cases in which “we speak of existence” and says that in one of them “the question is whether a proper name designates, names, something”. (See Frege 1895, 104.) And he says, “People certainly say that Odysseus is not an historical person, and mean by this contradictory expression that the name ‘Odysseus’ designates nothing”. (See Frege 1906, 161.) Elsewhere, though, Frege ([pre-1884?], 60) seems to suggest that ‘Sachse exists’ doesn’t mean “The word ‘Sachse’ is not an empty sound, but designates something”, since “this is not a new premise, but the presupposition of all our words”. (On reference being presupposed, see also Frege 1892, 31, 40.) See Salmon (1998, 282–285).
- 25 The *choice* negation of a proposition that’s neither true nor false is itself neither true nor false, whereas the *exclusion* negation of a proposition that’s neither true nor false is true. (The distinction comes from Boćvar 1939.) See Salmon (1998, 280).
- 26 (11) isn’t true, but it could be. (Harry Potter is Rowling’s favorite character. See Flood 2011.)
- 27 See McKinsey (2020, 134–135). One might worry that, even understood *de re*, (9D\*) is false. Alternatively, descriptivists about names from fiction might adopt the fictionalist strategy discussed below in the text. Thanks to David Friedell and Erin Mercurio for discussion here.
- 28 Thanks to Joshua Spencer for suggesting this reply to me.
- 29 See van Inwagen (1977), Parsons (1980, 49–60, 175–211), Wolterstorff (1980, 134–149), Salmon (1998, 293–304), Thomasson (1999), Braun (2005, 609–614), Kripke (2011, 2013, 61–83).
- 30 ‘F’ is for ‘fictionalism’.
- 31 For (8FD)–(11FD) to be true requires a version of fictional realism on which Hermione Granger is a concrete object instantiating *being the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time*. (See Brock 2002, 11–14.) Alternatively, descriptivists about names from fiction could replace ‘the person who saves Harry and Ron all the time’ with something like ‘there’s an object such that, according to some fiction, it saves Harry and Ron all the time’ (and make corresponding adjustments).
- 32 See also Frege ([1891–1895?], 133; 1897, 141).
- 33 See McDowell (1977, 172–175).
- 34 See Evans (1982, 14–22).
- 35 Frege (1879, §8). I am assuming that “modes of determination” (*Bestimmungsweisen*) from the *Begriffsschrift* are precursors of “modes of presentation” (*Art des Gegebenseins*)—or senses—from “On Sense and Reference”. See Frege (1892, 25–26).
- 36 Thanks to Murali Ramachandran for discussion here.
- 37 See McDowell (1977, 172–175), Evans (1982, 10–14, 22–30).
- 38 See Evans (1982, 22).
- 39 Kripke (2013, 26). The view, he says, analyzes “names in fiction according to the same paradigm that Frege used for ‘Aristotle’, the name of a historical figure—that is as the unique person (or other object) fulfilling the story”. See Kripke (2013, 10 n12).
- 40 I don’t discuss Kripke’s (2013, 27–28) third objection, based on a case in which ‘Napoleon’ occurs in a work of fiction. ‘Napoleon’ isn’t a name from fiction in the relevant sense (see note 2), so the case isn’t a counterexample to descriptivism about names from fiction. (The case is a counterexample to a thesis “subsidiary” to Thesis (4): namely, “it is *a priori* true for the speaker that, if not enough of the  $\phi$ s are satisfied, then X does not exist”. See Kripke (1980, 66; italics in original). On Thesis (4), see below in the text. The case echoes Kripke’s (1980, 67) ‘Jonah’ case.)
- 41 Kripke (1980, 71; italics in original). Cf. Kripke (1980, 64, 65).
- 42 Kripke (1980, 80–81; italics in original).
- 43 Kripke (1980, 86; italics in original).

- 44 I owe the observation about the fictional analog of Thesis (4) to Joshua Spencer.
- 45 Italics in original.
- 46 Kripke (2013, 26–27). See also Kripke (1980, 157–158; 2011, 56–57).
- 47 Descriptivists about names from fiction might say that the sense of ‘Hermione Granger’ is given by a more complicated definite description, one that’s immune to the possibility of accidental satisfaction. For example, McKinsey (2020, 131) suggests that the sense of ‘Hermione Granger’ is given by ‘the person who the fictional author of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* uses “Hermione Granger” to refer to’. (Currie (1990, 76) appeals to what he calls a “fictional author”—“that fictional character constructed within our make-believe whom we take to be telling us the story as known fact”—to provide an account of truth in fiction: roughly, what’s true in the fiction is what it’s reasonable for us to infer that the fictional author believes. See Currie (1990, 92), McKinsey (2020, 130).) But, as McKinsey (2020, 131) notes, one difference between actual authors and fictional authors is that, whereas actual authors actually exist, fictional authors don’t: “the fictional author . . . , being fictional, does not exist”. So, unlike ‘the actual author of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*’, which refers to Rowling, ‘the fictional author of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*’ doesn’t refer to anything. And so, unlike ‘the person who the actual author of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* uses “Hermione Granger” to refer to’, which might accidentally refer to someone (if Rowling uses ‘Hermione Granger’ to refer to someone), ‘the person who the fictional author of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* uses “Hermione Granger” to refer to’ can’t ever refer to anything.

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